

Message Text

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64

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9468

INFO AMCONGEN BELIZE

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: GT, MX, BH, PINT, MASS, MILI

SUBJ: US EMBARGO ON ARMS SALES TO GUATEMALA CHARGED

1. FOLLOWING PRESS ITEM RECEIVED FRONT-PAGE HEADLINE TREATMENT
IN THE DECEMBER 19 EDITION OF THE PRESTIGIOUS AFTERNOON
JOURNAL IMPARCIAL. THE HEADLINE AND SUBHEADLINES READ:
"UNITED STATES: ARMS EMBARGO OF GUATEMALA. A SUSPENSION OF
ARMS SALES IN CONFIRMED. INITIATIVE NOW BEING MADE FOR
PURCHASE IN EUROPE."

2. THE BODY OF THE ARTICLE READS, "THE UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA IS SYSTEMATICALLY BLOCKADING GUATEMALA,SO THAT ITS
ARMY CANNOT RESUPPLY ITSELF WITH ARMS AND OTHER MILITARY
SUPPLIES NECESSARY FOR THE DEFENSE OF ITS SOVEREIGNTY,
ACCORDING TO A REPORT TODAY IN DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY
CIRCLES.

3. "THUS THE RUMOR THAT WAS CIRCULATING IN JOURNALISTIC
CIRCLES FOR SEVERAL MONTHS IS CONFIRMED, THAT THE UNITED
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STATES SUSPENDED THE SALE OF AIRPLANES, TANKS, HELICOPTERS

AND OTHER WAR MATERIAL WITH A GUATEMALA DESTINATION.

4. "THE UNITED STATES HAS TRADITIONALLY SUPPLIED GUATEMALA WITH NECESSARY WAR MATERIAL FOR MANY YEARS, BUT WHAT HAS HAPPENED THIS YEAR IS THAT THE PENTAGON, IT SEEMS, HAS TAKEN THE DECISION TO EMBARGO THE PURCHASE OF ARMS BY GUATEMALA.

5. "THE EMBARGO, IT WAS KNOWN, HAS REACHED THE EXTREME THAT THE UNITED STATES REFUSED TO SELL VARIOUS TURBINES FOR HELICOPTERS BOUGHT IN THE UNITED STATES, BECAUSE IT PUT IN A BIND THE GUATEMALAN AIR FORCE, WHICH ALSO HAS PROBLEMS PRESENTLY BUYING OTHER SPARE PARTS NECESSARY FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF ITS GROUND AND AIR EQUIPMENT.

6. "THIS SITUATION HAS LED TO A GUATEMALAN INITIATIVE TO BUY ARMS IN THE EUROPEAN MARKET.

7. "EVEN WHEN THE ARMS ARE OF AMERICAN MANUFACTURE GUATEMALA HAS HAD TO ACQUIRE THEM IN THE EUROPEAN MARKET, IT WAS STATED.

8. "A PROOF OF THIS IS THE PURCHASE OF ARAVA AIRCRAFT FROM ISRAEL, AND FROM EFFORTS WHICH ARE BEING MADE BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE FOR THE PURCHASE OF AIRCRAFT IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

9. " IN REFERRING TO THE SERVICE IN WHICH EARLIER THE UNITED STATES ASSISTED THE GUATEMALAN AIR FORCE, IT WAS STATED THAT THAT COUNTRY, WITHOUT EXPLAINING ITS MOTIVES, HAS TRIPLED THE COST OF THE SAME FOR GUATEMALA, WHILE THE CHARGE FOR OTHER COUNTRIES REMAINS THE SAME.

10. " APPARENTLY THE POSITION OF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT CORRESPONDS TO ITS FOREIGN POLICY IN REGARD TO BELIZE, MORE EXACTLY TO THE FEAR OF SAID COUNTRY THAT EVENTUALLY GUATEMALA COULD INVADE THE TERRITORY OF BELIZE, WHICH WOULD CERTAINLY CREATE A CONTINENTAL AND INTER-CONTINENTAL CONFLICT IN WHICH THE UNITED STATES WOULD BE DIRECTLY INVOLVED, DUE TO THE POSITION WHICH CUBA MAINTAINS REGARDING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THIS SAME CASE."

11. COMMENT: THIS NEWS ITEM APPEARED TWO DAYS AFTER A SIMILAR ARTICLE APPEARED IN THE DECEMBER 17 EDITION OF THE AFTERNOON JOURNAL LA TARDE WITH AN AGENCE FRANCE PRESS BYLINE OUT OF MEXICO. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE COMMANDER OF THE GUATEMALAN AIR FORCE OR OTHER HIGH OFFICER WAS PROBABLY QUERIED BY IMPARCIAL ABOUT THE AFP STORY AND LET OFF

SOME STEAM. WHILE THERE HAVE SINCE BEEN TWO SHORT ARTICLES ON
INSIDE PAGES OF ONE EDITORIAL OTHER NEWSPAPERS REPORTING NO COMMENT
STANCE OF ARMY SPOKESMAN RELATING TO THE IMPARCIAL STORY, THE
EMBASSY DOES NOT INTEND TO RESPOND UNLESS THE IMPARCIAL
CHARGES RECEIVE CONSIDERABLY MORE ATTENTION.

12. HOWEVER, IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT NO MATTER
HOW EXAGGERATED AND DISTORTED THE AFP AND IMPARCIAL
STORIES MAY HAVE BEEN, THEY DO ACCURATELY REFLECT THE
PERCEIVED GRIEVANCES OF THE GUATEMALAN MILITARY
MELOY

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